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Description: This document preserves a copy of the Wall Street Journal article "Ex-Hacker Kevin Mitnick Teaches From Experience," published on October 15, 2003. The article discusses Kevin Mitnick's post-release information security activities, his partnership with Alex Kasper through Defensive Thinking, and their social engineering training work with Intense School.

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Ex-Hacker Kevin Mitnick Teaches From Experience

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Hacking Away

Reformed hacker Kevin Mitnick is back, leading "boot camps" across the nation to help companies protect themselves from intruders.

Mr. Mitnick's about-face from his days as one of the world's most infamous hackers comes three years after he served a five-year prison sentence for computer fraud and other charges. He was banned from using a computer for an additional three years, a restriction that expired in January.

Since then, Mr. Mitnick and a friend, Alex Kasper, launched a start-up information-security company in Los Angeles called Defensive Thinking. Now the two are partnering with a Fort Lauderdale, Fla., information-technology training center called Intense School Inc. The two-day class costs about $1,500, and clients include the U.S. Air Force and Marines and mortgage companies. Students learn how to avoid being duped by so-called social engineers, con artists who use techniques as innocuous as calling secretaries to gain access to passwords and data instead of infiltrating computer systems.

Intense School approached Mr. Mitnick in January to lead the classes with Mr. Kasper. Mr. Mitnick's notoriety didn't escape school administrators. Co-founder and Chief Technology Officer Barry Kaufman says he ran the idea by folks in the information-security industry before signing up the duo for a year. Most responses were favorable, he says.

Mr. Mitnick, who says he's "pretty hardened" by the experiences he has gone through, says: "You have two camps of people that kind of believe, 'Hey, I paid my dues to society...' and then you have people who say, 'He's a criminal. He's profiting from his crime.' " Mr. Kaufman declines to divulge how much the duo is being paid.